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ENG 3009G-001: Myth and Culture

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Asian Collectivism and Western Individualism

English 3009 (Myth and Culture)

Fall, 2018

11:00-12:15, Tues/Thurs – Coleman 3170

Instructor: Tim Engles

Office: Coleman 3831

Office hours: 12:15 – 2:15 p.m. TR, and by appointment

Required TRS texts (in chronological order, not the order in which we will read them)

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (1868)

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

Banana Yoshimoto, *Kitchen* (1988)

Yu Hua, *To Live* (1993)

Yan Lianke, *Serve the People!* (2005)

Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese* (2006)

Han Kang, *The Vegetarian* (2007)

Kyung-Sook Shin, *Please Look After Mom* (2009)

Mohsin Hamid, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013)

Chen Chen, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Possibilities* (2017)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,
and I will request your written agreement to them)**

A general description of our course from the EIU Course Catalog:

“Through comparative analysis of myths from diverse cultural traditions, this course will examine relationships among mythical, historical, theological, socio-anthropological and scientific ways of understanding.”

Our particular focus will be on creative representations from differing cultures of the myths and realities of individualism and collectivism. Generally, “American” culture in particular has long been considered highly individualistic, with an emphasis on individual freedom, independence and self-containment. Asian cultures have long been considered more collectivist, with an emphasis on community and interconnectedness with others. A closer look reveals both the general truths of such contrasting cultural tendencies and some myths that undergird them.

Using creative literature as our primary object of study, we will examine the effects of these myths and realities for characters, authors and readers. Guiding questions will include: What are the foundations of such general tendencies? How do these contrasting ideas about personhood clash when people from such opposing cultures meet? As we will see, literature and other documents can illuminate the truths and the countervailing myths of an overly sharp division

between “Western” individualism and “Eastern” collectivism, especially as such ideologies play out in ordinary people’s lives.

We will conduct our course as an inquiring conversation on these matters, with your active participation central to our work. Because we are a relatively small group, the success of our conversations will depend heavily on everyone’s participation. *It is therefore crucial that you keep up with the reading, that you do so with careful attention, and that you pay attention in class (as noted below, in-class laptop and cell phone usage are not allowed).*

A note about reading: Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully. Take notes as you read, then decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will occasionally give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings (see below for more on quizzes).

Grades: Each assignment will be graded on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, etc.), and your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Mid-term project	15%
Mid-term exam	15%
Paired presentation	15%
Final exam	20%
Major project	20%
Participation/forum responses/ quizzes/attendance	15%

Missed quizzes, missed exams, and late projects: Occasional reading **quizzes** will be unannounced and they cannot be made up. These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. I recognize that some students must be absent at times; accordingly, when I compile your quiz grades at the end of the semester into an average score, I will drop the lowest one—if you miss a quiz, that will be your one dropped quiz. If you don’t miss any quizzes, I will still drop your lowest score from your quiz average. Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after quizzes are taken, they cannot be made up (even if you come to class late).

There will be no make-up **exams**—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles. Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “Zero” on it, unless arrangements are made ahead of time regarding an essay substitution. Exams will cover all materials and concepts assigned and discussed in class. They are designed to test knowledge; hone critical thinking, reading, and writing skills; and reward students who keep up with and think critically about the issues raised in class.

Essays/projects are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether you are in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in an essay before its due date if you know you must miss class that day.

D2L Activity: Enrollment in this class requires use of D2L, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for information pertaining to the course. Updates about the course will periodically appear there, as will copies of assignment guidelines and certain handouts. If I must miss a class session, I will notify students as soon as I can at D2L with a cancellation notice. Also, D2L email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments.

Regular use of D2L is crucial for this course—if you do not send me a D2L email message by Friday, August 24 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and your class participation grade will drop precipitously. See F AUG 24 below on the Daily Schedule for what to include in this message. I am of course in our course's D2L address book, at tdengles@online.eiu.edu (this address will NOT work with regular email).

Classroom environment: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. I do not plan to merely lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment.

We will honor the request of any students who prefer being addressed by an alternate/preferred name or gender pronoun. If you have such a preference, please let me know early in the semester so that I can make appropriate changes to my records. Also, be aware that sensitive issues can arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—remember to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. In my opinion, it's okay for discussions to occasionally become “heated,” and “off the topic” of literature, as long as we respect each other as people. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other students have the same question.

Some pet-peeves of mine, and some requirements that you've probably heard before: in the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, please do not read outside materials, chew gum, or eat food in class (drinking beverages is okay), and do not use a computer or phone in class. **Be sure to silence your phone ahead of time, and do not check or write text messages during class.**

If you happen to be expecting an emergency call or text, it's okay to keep your phone on, but be sure to let me know before class begins.

Finally, please refrain from “packing up” during the last few minutes of class. I will signal when our discussion is finished, and I promise to end each class by the time the period is over (you're welcome to call me on it if I don't).

Attendance policy: The rule regarding attendance is: **be here.** I notice and record absences. I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule.” Missing class frequently will lower your final grade as well as your grades on the reading quizzes. More than three undocumented absences will lower your class

participation grade to “Zero.” In addition, note that coming to class “prepared” means coming to class with that day’s assigned reading—anyone who does not have a printed copy of the day’s assigned reading with them may be considered absent.

Regarding tardiness: This is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another course. Also, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the phone number or email of one or two other students in class, so you can find out about any missed assignments *before* you come to class.

Academic honesty: Keep in mind, of course, the English Department’s policy on plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

ENGLISH 3009 – DAILY SCHEDULE

(this schedule may be subject to change;
bring the day's reading material to class—
students who don't do so may be marked absent;
handouts from class will also be available as PDFs at D2L)

T AUG 21 Introduction to the course; discussion of “individualism,” “collectivism”

- ✓ In-class readings: The United States Declaration of Independence and the Korean Declaration of Independence
- ✓ Sometime after class, and before Friday, August 24 at 3:00 p.m., send a **D2L email** to Dr. Engles (see F JAN 12 below for more detailed instructions)

R AUG 23 Readings for today (handouts from Tuesday): David Robson, “How East and West Think in Profoundly Different Ways” (2017) and James Baldwin, “The Man Child” (1965)

F AUG 24 By 3 p.m. today, carefully read the policies and procedures for this course, and then send a D2L email message to Dr. Engles (with our course's D2L address book, or by writing in the address tdengles@online.eiu.edu).

- ✓ Describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, including your career aspirations
- ✓ Write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with the course policies and procedures
- ✓ Briefly explain what your understanding of “multicultural literature” was before you signed up for this course
- ✓ Be sure that you “sign” our course contract by adding your name at the end of your email

T AUG 28 Reading for today: John K. Bramman, “René Descartes and Solitary Self” (handout from Thursday)

R AUG 30 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (excerpts; 1835, 1840; handout)

T SEP 4 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1841; handout)

R SEP 6 Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (1968), 3-66

T SEP 11 Finish *Ragged Dick*

R SEP 13 Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 1-106

T SEP 18 Finish *American Born Chinese*

R SEP 20 “Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism/Daoism”; in-class discussion of writing assignment from 9/13 regarding one of these terms

T SEP 25 Yu, *To Live* (1993), 3-85; In-class discussion of Mid-term Project

R SEP 27 *To Live*, 85-163

T OCT 2 Finish *To Live*

R OCT 4 Yoshimoto, "Kitchen," 3-51

T OCT 9 Project Day: **No class**—work hard on your Mid-term project. If any students would like to consult with Dr. Engles about their projects, he will be available in his office today, 11:30 to 3 (emailed questions any time are also of course welcome)

R OCT 11 Finish "Kitchen" ("Moonlight Shadow" is not required); Mid-term Project due at the beginning of class

T OCT 16 Mid-term Exam

R OCT 18 Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

T OCT 23 *A Raisin in the Sun*

R OCT 25 *A Raisin in the Sun*

T OCT 30 Chen, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Possibilities* (2017)

R NOV 1 *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Possibilities* and Kang, *The Vegetarian* (2007)

T NOV 6 *The Vegetarian*

R NOV 8 *The Vegetarian*

T NOV 13 Hamid, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013)

R NOV 15 *How to Get Filthy Rich*

Monday, November 19 to Friday, November 23 – Thanksgiving Break!

T NOV 27 *How to Get Filthy Rich*

R NOV 29 Presentations

T DEC 4 Presentations; Final Project due at the beginning of class

R DEC 6 Presentations

Final Exam – Monday, December 10, 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (remember that students who must miss the exam will write a major essay instead on a topic of Dr. Engles' choice)